

STATE INITIATIVES

Recent National Register of Historic Places Listings

Rustin Quaide
Tangula Chambers
National Register of Historic Places

The Booker T. Washington High School and Auditorium

The Booker T. Washington High
School and Auditorium, located
on 1201 South Roman Street,
New

Orleans, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 17, 2002, for its significance as a milestone in the development of secondary public school education for African-Americans in New Orleans.

The Art Deco three-story high school and attached auditorium opened in 1942. It had state-of-the-art vocational educational facilities, and was the first public high school in the city built for African Americans. The Washington High School's opening was the result of decades of sustained activism from African-American community leaders, working through civic, religious, and educational organizations, including the Colored Educational Alliance, the New Orleans NAACP, and the Federation of Civic Leagues. The auditorium became a municipal auditorium for the African-American community, and such entertainers as Paul Robeson, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie and Mahalia Jackson performed there.

The Roosevelt School Auditorium and Classroom Addition

The Roosevelt School Auditorium and Classroom Addition, located in Mission, Hidalgo County, Texas, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 1, 2002, is the only surviving element of Mission's once segregated school system and is significant for its contributions to the city's ethnic heritage and association with the Hispanic population. In 1921, the Mission Independent School District (ISD) built a separate school in South Mission for the purpose of educating Mexican-American children.

The School District added an auditorium to the campus in 1929 and a classroom addition in 1949. These additions are the only part of the original campus still standing and are, in fact, the district's only surviving historic school buildings. The Roosevelt School campus was used until 1968, when an accrediting team condemned the original 1921 building for safety reasons, and the main building was razed.



Lodge Boleslav Jablonsky No. 219

The Lodge Boleslav Jablonsky, No.219 in Poplar Grove Township, Minnesota, was listed in the National Register on September 10, 2002. The Czechs and other ethnic groups arriving in this region of Minnesota in the 1890s were intent on maintaining their identity and language by establishing churches and schools that maintained language and cultural traditions brought from their countries of origin. The Boleslav Jablonsky Lodge hall was built in 1916, although a local Czech organization had been in existence since 1914.

The lodge was named for Boleslav Jablonsky (1813–1881), a priest, poet, and Czech nationalist. The lodge hall has been in continuous use from 1916 to the present. Built by lodge members, the hall is a wood frame structure on a poured concrete foundation with no basement. It was listed because of its significance in the area of ethnic heritage and social history.

Virginia Key Beach Park

Located on a barrier island near Miami, Virginia Key Beach Park was designated as the first African American beach in the city. Because African Americans were banned from all public

beaches in the area, this park was set aside exclusively for blacks, and provided for their recreational needs as well as religious functions, such as picnics and baptisms.

Virginia Key Beach Park developed out of the protest in the summer of 1945 by a group of black men, led by Judge Lawson E. Thomas. The group staged a protest at the “whites-only” Baker’s Haulover Beach in northern Dade County against the segregation laws that prohibited black persons from using the public beaches of Miami and Dade County. In response to the protest, county officials established a public beach for the black

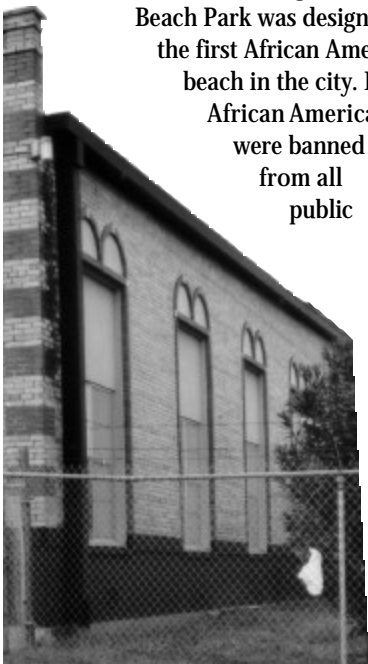
community on Virginia Key,

(bottom left) **The Art Deco Booker T. Washington High School** also served as a municipal auditorium for the African-American community, featuring national acts, such as Dizzy Gillespie. Photo courtesy of Donna Fricker.

(bottom middle) **The Roosevelt school auditorium and addition** were listed in the National Register in recognition of their significance to the city’s ethnic heritage. Photo courtesy of the Texas State Historical Commission.

(bottom right) **The Lodge Boleslav Jablonsky** assisted Czech immigrants in maintaining cultural identity after settling in Minnesota. Photo courtesy of David C. Anderson.

(above) **As a stepping stone for the eventual desegregation of public facilities**, Virginia Key Beach Park was the first African American in the city of Miami. Photo courtesy of Vicki L. Cole.



which opened on August 1, 1945. This beach served as a stepping stone to desegregate other public facilities. This property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on June 28, 2002, for its connection with African-American heritage and recreational progress.

Hurricane of 1928 African American Mass Grave

The Hurricane of 1928 African American Mass Burial site in West Palm Beach, Florida, is the burial site of approximately 674 victims, primarily African-American agricultural workers, who were killed in the hurricane of 1928 that devastated South Florida—one of the worst natural disasters in American history. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 13, 2002, the catastrophe was a major event for the African-American community and was described by noted author Zora Neale Hurston. Well-known educator Mary

McLeod Bethune and 3,000 other mourners attended the memorial service at the mass grave.

The bodies were brought to West Palm Beach, Florida, and were delivered to two cemeteries. Sixty-nine bodies were buried in a mass grave intended for white victims at Woodlawn Cemetery, and 674 victims were buried in a mass grave intended for black victims in the city's pauper cemetery at 25th Street and Tamarind Avenue, although the burial site was never identified. In December 2000, the City of West Palm Beach reacquired the property of the burial ground and plans to memorialize this site in the history of the community.

Cine El Rey

The Cine El Rey ("The King Cinema") opened as a theater in downtown McAllen, Texas, in 1947 and served the city's Hispanic community for 40 years. The movie house was built to capitalize on the demand for Spanish-language

entertainment created by the influx of Mexican *Braceros* into the United States during the 1940s. The *Braceros* were named after the U.S.-Mexican *Bracero* program established at the end of World War II to help with a shortage of agricultural workers in the United States. More than 4.9 million Mexican workers were recruited to work on U.S. farms. Many of Mexico's greatest actors and actresses made personal appearances on the El Rey stage, including German Valdes, Pedro Infante, Pedro Armendariz, Sara Garcia, Antonio Aguilar, Tito Guizar, and Lucha Villa.

The Cine El Rey is a good example of a small-town, downtown movie theater in Texas in the 1940s. The building features a projecting neon marquee, neon and metal canopy, bold colors, geometric

pat-



terns, and enamel panels on the lower part of the front façade, all of which contribute to its Moderne design. Cine El Rey was listed in the National Register for its architectural and ethnic heritage significance.

Palo Homestead

The John and Justina Palo Homestead is an example of a Finnish homestead that was constructed when the northern Wisconsin “cutover” was settled in the late 1880s and early 1900s by immigrants from Finland. Located in the Township of Oulu, Bayfield County, Wisconsin, the house was built in 1910–1911. Listed in the National Register on September 14, 2002, the John and Justina Palo Homestead is a cluster of four buildings and includes a house, an outbuilding which is partitioned into a sauna, a woodshed, and a workshop.

The original house was a simple vernacular two-story log structure, which rests on a poured concrete foundation. The original house was a gabled “ell” design. An addition was constructed in the late 1920s or early 1930s that enclosed the entrance area. A pantry was located in this addition and the stairway to the second story was relocated here. The Palo Homestead is significant as it represents the settlement pattern of Finnish settlement in northern Wisconsin.

(left) The Moderne-style Cine El Rey was a center of ethnic heritage for the Mexican agricultural workers in Hidalgo County. Photo illustration by Marcia Axtmann Smith based on photo courtesy of Luis Muñoz.

(right) The Palo House, listed in the National Register on September 14, 2002, is representative of Finnish immigration to Wisconsin at the turn of the 20th century. Photo courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Crisler Mounds

Crisler Mounds Site is a burial mound site overlooking the Ohio River. It is attributed to the Adena culture based on their size, shape, and topographic location. Adena culture is best known for its mortuary ritual system characterized by the construction of burial mounds. Located in Boone County, Kentucky, where other similar Adena burial mounds have been found, the Crisler Mounds site was listed in the National Register on April 11, 2002, based upon its potential to yield further information on prehistoric Indian peoples.

Sugar Hill Historic District

The Sugar Hill Historic District was the preeminent African American residential enclave during New York City’s Harlem Renaissance and afterwards. It was home to many famous African Americans, including Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., Thurgood Marshall, W.E.B. Du Bois,

and Duke Ellington. The historic district is made up of over 400 buildings of various late 19th and 20th century Revival styles—French Renaissance, Colonial, Tudor, as well as Art Deco and Moderne style buildings.

Sugar Hill housed an economically diverse population, but was the symbolic focus of African American achievement until the late 1960s. Sugar Hill Historic District was listed in the National Register on April 11, 2002, based on its architectural significance, social history, and community planning and development.

Heritage Trails in Iron County

Marcia Bernhardt
Iron County Historical and Museum Society

The Friends of Heritage Trail in Iron County, Michigan, have been working diligently to identify historic sites and provide appropriate signs for them. All are located either within or near the perimeter of the Ottawa



National Forest. The sites chosen for signage represent a range of cultural heritage sites, significant to the history of Michigan.

Initially thirteen sites were selected for signage. The first was Pentoga Park Indian Burial Grounds, where small wooden structures protect and mark individual Native American graves. It was followed by the Iron County Museum in Caspian. It is located on an 8.5-acre tract with 22 buildings, including a former mine site, whose headframe is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Three other sites have been dedicated, including the Iron County Courthouse in Crystal Falls; the Amasa Museum, located in the former township hall of Amasa; and Larson Park, located along U.S. 2. Three more sites—Apple Blossom Trail, the Harbour House, and Mansfield Location and Pioneer Church—are scheduled for dedication this year, with the other sites, such as Be-Wa-Bic State Park and Lake Ottawa Recreation Area to be dedicated in the near future.

The work of the Friends has developed much local interest and is responsible for a movement in other counties in the Upper of Peninsula of Michigan to carry out similar projects. As a result of the Friends' work, the Michigan Department of Transportation has designated U.S. 2 from Crystal Falls to Iron River a State Heritage Route.

For more information on the Friends of Heritage Trail in Iron County, visit their website at www.ironheritage.org/.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

Archeological Investigations at Gunston Hall Yields Information on Enslaved Population

Anne Worsley
National Register of Historic Places,
History and Education

Gunston Hall is a brick Georgian mansion completed in 1760 in Mason Neck, Virginia, by George Mason, father of the Virginia Bill of Rights, gentry man, and patriot. He was also a slave owner. Approximately 80 enslaved persons lived and worked at Gunston Hall. It was on the lives of these individuals that recent archeological investigations focused its excavations. In one of the few documents that describes the landscape surrounding Gunston Hall, George Mason's son John recounts in an 1830 journal entry:

"to the East [of the mansion] was a high paled yard, adjoining the House into which opened an outer door from the private front, within or connected with which yard were the kitchen, well, poultry Houses and other domestic arrangements; and beyond it on the same side were the corn house and grainery—servants house's (in them days called Negroe quarters)"

During the first week, excavations were focused in the yard east of the mansion. Two-foot-by-two-foot test units were laid out in 20-foot intervals. The soil layers, color, and composition varied greatly from unit to unit. One unit in the area described by Mason as slave quarters did present an exciting find, possible foundation stones. Further investigation into the east yard may determine the nature of these stones.

The kitchen yard, where enslaved African Americans would have lived

and worked, was also investigated. Remnants of pathways were found in two adjacent units, both 18th and 19th century, meaning that at least part of the kitchen yard was not disturbed by human occupation since George Mason's time. Artifacts were heavily concentrated in this area, from pottery (creamware, pearlware, stone-ware, and porcelain), to glass, animal bones, and nails. A fence post and series of postholes also were uncovered. A formal garden runs adjacent to the kitchen yard, and according to the findings, it was fenced during the 18th century. The fence line runs into the reconstructed kitchen yard. Future excavations planned hopefully will reveal more about how the buildings in the kitchen yard were situated in relation to the mansion, the formal garden, and the rest of Gunston Hall.

For more information on Gunston Hall, visit www.gunstonhall.org.

Preservation and Protection of the New Philadelphia Site

Vibert L. White
New Philadelphia Project

In 2000, the University of Illinois stumbled upon one of the most intriguing stories in American history. New Philadelphia, a community that is known only by a few people outside of Pike County, Illinois, is recognized as the first incorporated African-American town in the United States. Unlike Chicago, which was first discovered by a black explorer, the New Philadelphia site was located, purchased, founded, and governed by a former enslaved man named Free Frank McWorthy.

New Philadelphia, as McWorthy